

THE CHOOSING ASPECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

Julia Spohr.

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To introduce the subject we must have some idea of what consciousness is. To be conscious is to think, to think is to put together impressions and ideas and in order to do this we must be the subject of internal changes. These internal changes in turn are caused by surrounding things. For instance place an organism in the midst of some objects. If it is uninfluenced by them it can know or think nothing of them.

Their existence can only be revealed by the effects they produce upon it. So with our lives we are influenced by the world about us and especially our associates.

Incessant change however is not the sole thing needed to produce consciousness, for if these so called changes are at random, we have no consciousness. Analysing these thoughts we may formulate a working definition by saying that, "Consciousness is an orderly succession of changes combined and arrayed in special ways." If note be taken of the different states as they occur, if they pass through consciousness simply as images pass over a mirror there can be no intelligence until these states are classified.

To choose certain states of consciousness is not an easy task for on the contrary it is the choosing wherein lies the difficulty.

We are all here to fulfil some task or mission and cannot afford to go out of our volition until the last item of our duty is fulfilled.

There is one word that means so much to us, and it is that word "suggestion." No man knows what hour will bring to him a suggestion that may change the whole course of his life or how does

it happen that one is a merchant, another a doctor, a third, a lawyer, etc. Our environments influence us largely. Were it not for our reasoning or our will suggestion would be absolute in its power and control. Suggestion therefore is an instrument of great and subtle power and one to be handled with care.

The will has a wonderfully strong influence over the body.

Good work is the safeguard of health and the way to live well is to work. No matter how humble we are we are worthy of reverence because even in our limited sphere we can be a forward working agent working for some good.

We should all have before us an aim but let it be a worthy one.

So far as the human race is concerned it is the effort that counts and not so much the attainment.

Every vocation even the lowliest which we choose in a spirit of entire sincerity is a means of acquiring culture. After this cultivation is reached we see things in their relations. Our daily avocation whatever it be, if we cling to it closely enough, is sure to engender in us a new respect for reality,--a new humility. The way to overcome dejection is to energise our nature vigorously. An eminent physician is quoted as saying, "I firmly believe that one half of the confirmed invalids could be cured of their maladies if they were compelled to live busy, active lives and had no time to fret over their miseries."

We so often hear the question, "Is life worth living?" The right question to ask is, "Am I worthy of living?" If we are not it is in our power to make ourselves. The world we see about us is one in which a few succeed and where many must fail. Realists have said, "There are not good enough things for all." The question

is whether such a state of things is just. On the contrary it must be admitted to be a hard, unreasonable, unjust universe. It is not for the individual however set without consent of his own in such a universe to change it. His only problem in such a case is to choose to be the hammer and not the anvil. The world must give up thinking of what people call happiness, and must without fear or self seeking do his duty. He must be of that unselfish nature, deal fairly with people and there must be in him no distinction of great or small, of significant or insignificant.

He must be free from the desire to shine and must not possess vanity. One who is pure in motive will permit himself to be conspicuous only when and where his duty demands it.

Idealism is a form of faith that is reached by a deep interpretation of the world and a gaining of victory over it and especially over one's self and to master ourselves by force of habit and strength of principles.

No self seeking person however reaches the end he most desires, a great fault right here lies in the fact that we long for praise and a lack of it hurts us more than some of the severest criticisms. It is surprising what one accomplishes when attention and energy are given to one thing.

Here is when success is obtained. In speaking of success I will say as is so often been said, that the "Secret of success lies in failure and unbroken success is necessary only for cowards."

Not one in ten attains the success he desires so we perceive how exhausting is the effort of self seeking.

However this world is not made up of people who choose the ever-seeking method but quite the opposite, those who choose to follow the narrow path which their physical nature indicates ful-

filling their little span of life and knowing no other destiny. Then too there are those that will choose happiness while others will seek to attain worthiness.

Happiness may come but we never dare to make it the end. Those which seek the unsatisfying end of life seek what is known as the higher life. Goethe has expressed it, "While one strives he errs." We should all strive to attain that higher life which includes such virtues as personal purity, truthfulness and a forgiving spirit toward enemies. When though shall we have the strength to do the right and shun the wrong? The desire for self respect and the fear of self condemnation are aids to achieving what is right. Higher life is led on the level of every day existence, therefore to so attain we must choose to resist temptations, to put forth dignity, and to lead pure, serene, truthful lives.

We must also have self-discipline, and self-discipline in turn involves pain but the end in view is worthy of the price exacted of us. We call him a hero who conquers the enemies within his own breast, and we admire the soul which can rule its own passions and force them into obedience to the dictates of reason.

Another phase and one closely connected with "Higher Life" may well be spoken of here and it is the "Spiritual Life." So long as men differ as profoundly as they do in temperament, education, occupation and whatever else goes to shape a man's life, there will be different types of religious experience. There is undoubtedly something universal in religion, something adapted to all men in spite of their peculiarities. The fact that there is a spiritual power in us, that is a power which testifies to the unity of our life with the life of others, which impels us to regard others as other selves comes home to us more forcibly in sorrow than in joy.

By what experience then are we led to the conviction that a spirit exists? By painful experience. For instance, a person who endures great bodily suffering with fortitude will discover that there is something in him which the senses are at times powerless to affect. Why in this world of ours should there be so much suffering? No one knows.

We do know however that evil existing in this world being such as it is, we can win from evil if we choose that good--namely; that a spirit exists and exists in us. Deep down in every heart is the seed of a divine life which only needs the quickening influence of right conditions to germinate. If we could but always choose these conditions.

To conclude the most important thought is, There is only one life to live and we all want to do our best with it.

The first years out of college are apt to be anxious, unsatisfactory and disappointing. Time slips away in further preparation, in experiment, in useless or misdirected efforts. We will find that theories fail and yet one has not had positive experience to know just where the difficulty lies. Life is large and we cannot possibly grasp the whole of it in the few years that we have to live. What is vital? What is essential? What shall we profitably let go? Let us ask ourselves these questions and choose wisely. There are things in the circumstances of our lives that we can change, there are opportunities that our own efforts may enlarge. If we go through life timidly, weakly, ineffectively, the fault is with ourselves and not with the endowment nor environment. It is those that are lazy, cowardly, and idle that are incompetent for life. Carlyle says, "The Situation that has not its Duty its Ideal was never yet occupied by man." Let go of pretense, worry, discontent and self seeking.

It is by a wise choosing of the use of time that we become competent. Suppose each of us should resolve today that not a minute henceforward should ever be wasted. What energy, strength, noble purposes and grand results! Let us lay hold of work, work which occupies mind, body, heart and soul. Emerson says, "Nature arms each man with some faculty which enables him to do easily some feat impossible to another." It is then we are happy when we have done our duty.

Lastly I would say--choose friends. To have a friend is to have one of the sweetest gifts that life can bring. Seek as we may however we shall never find a friend without faults, imperfections, traits and ways that vex, grieve and annoy us. Strive as we will, we ourselves can never fully fulfil the ideal of us, that is in our friend's mind. We inevitably come short of it, yet let us not give up friendship though we have found this true. A friend gives us confidence, they remember us when we neglect and forget ourselves. They take loving heed of our work, aims and our plans. A friend may praise us and we are not embarrassed, or rebuke us and we do not become angry.

On the other hand one must forgive, forget and forbear much. It costs to be a friend or to have a friend. Letting go the unworthy things that meet us, pretense, worry, discontent and selfseeking, and taking loyal hold of time, work, present happiness, love, duty, friendship, sorrow and faith, let us live in all true womanliness and manliness as to be an inspiration, a strength and blessing to those whose lives are touched by ours.